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ER 83-6093/1

Study - Notes ^{25X1}
on Cuba & Nicaragua

19 December 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Senior Review Panel Members

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

Following on my earlier memorandum today, this analysis of work on Cuba and on Nicaragua in 1979 and 1980 may help you address those items in the context of this memorandum.


William J. Casey

Attachment:

Memo to DCI from NIO/LA, dtd 15 Jan 1982,
Subject: Review of 1981 Cuban Estimate
and Past CIA Analysis on Nicaragua--Summary
of Comments and Suggestions

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15 January 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : National Intelligence Officer for Latin America

SUBJECT : Review of the 1981 Cuban Estimate and Past CIA Analysis on
Nicaragua -- Summary of Comments and Suggestions

1. Responding to your request, two personal reviews of some past CIA work on Cuba and Nicaragua are attached:

- Cuban Policy Toward Latin America, including an Appendix (pp 9-13) summarizing the changes in the 11 drafts of the NIE from Jul 80 to Jun/Jul 81. 13 Jan 82 Tab A
- Nicaraguan Review, including Appendix A (pp 5-8) summarizing all the formal production items and Appendix B (pp 9-12) summarizing the informal memos from Jan 79 to Jul 81. 15 Jan 82 Tab B

This draft has not been reviewed by or coordinated with any office at this stage.

2. For each draft, the following brief overview will summarize my comments and several related suggestions for "how we might do better in the future".

Comments on the NIE: Cuban Policy Toward Latin America (at Tab A)

COMMENTS ON SUBSTANCE

SUGGESTIONS

- Estimate drafts were behind events and data

- e.g., initial Jul 80 draft far more tentative than CIA data and 2 May 79 analysis;
- e.g., final Jun/Jul 81 estimates did not take account of events in spring 81 or the massive synthesis of data on Cuban covert action done by the intelligence community in May 81.

-- After terms of reference are agreed, but before estimate drafts are written, prepare factual summaries, chronologies, maps, lists of previous relevant CIA publications.

-- Establish clear responsibility for updating the facts on a monthly basis.

- A "mind-set" problem

- e.g., drafts saw domestic failures, desire for "accommodation with US", policy "in transition" factions first preventing then impelling Cuban aggression.

-- Drafts should clearly summarize the factual information on key questions

-- then provide for alternative perspectives, even if in appendix only.

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COMMENTS ON SUBSTANCE

SUGGESTIONS

- Cuba-USSR relationship initially over-complicated
 - e.g., initial focus on doctrinal differences while ignoring the DGI/KGB relationship, unity of objectives, etc.
- Parochial failure to take account of Cuban actions in Africa/Middle East and their implications
 - e.g., discussions focused on Cuban actions in Latin America virtually ignoring its massive activities in Africa and the Middle East for their implications about Cuban purposes and techniques.

-- Where CIA has done a great deal of previous work on a key issue, the draft should briefly summarize those conclusions and then agree or disagree with reasons--why the specific situation is different.

-- Obvious need to use previous CIA analysis to explore what new skills, methods Cuban forces might have learned in their extensive Africa/Middle East actions.

Comments on Nicaraguan Analysis, 1979 to July 1981 (at Tab B)

COMMENTS ON SUBSTANCE

SUGGESTIONS

- Good performance in:
 - warning of the impending crisis;
 - monitoring extensive Cuban support to and influence on FSLN;
 - immediate post-victory Cuban/Nicaraguan decision to help the Salvadoran revolutionary forces.
- Medium performance:
 - too slow on likelihood of FSLN victory;
 - too reluctant to draw the implications of Sandinista moves to consolidate power;

-- Write an alternative, more pessimistic analysis with indicators.

-- Analysts working on a new Marxist revolution should look back at Cuba and other cases of power consolidation (Poland, 45-48) for perspective.

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COMMENTS ON SUBSTANCE

SUGGESTIONS

- unwilling to assess the implications of the immediate Cuban/Nicaraguan cooperation with El Salvador guerrillas.
- Key omissions
 - much too little reporting and analysis of the Mexican/Socialist International support for revolutionary left;
 - too little attention to the Palestinian terrorist/radical Arab connection;
 - much too little information on internal and international moderate groups and countries (has led to repeated CIA error "the Europeans are all against us in El Salvador"--failing to distinguish between the Social Democratic and Christian Democratic positions).

- Analysts should see this phase as a struggle (without guns) and report on the assets and resources of both sides and look ahead.
- Role-play the enemy--sketch what might be done based on evolving patterns.
- A more realistic and wholistic understanding of political and paramilitary war is clearly needed--the role and importance of international propaganda, meetings, deception, front groups--some past case studies should be synthesized (Algeria, Greece, Philippines, Vietnam) for broad lessons.

Atts: Tabs, A & B

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13 January 1981

Cuban Policy Toward Latin America (NIE 85/80/90-81)
Comments on the Drafts from July 1980 to July 1981*

During a one-year period, starting in July 1980, 11 successive drafts of a National Intelligence Estimate on Cuban Policy Toward Latin America were written and reviewed within CIA and the community. Final products were issued in June and July 1981. The Director has asked me to review these drafts and "analyze what we can learn in order to do better in the future".

In answer to the question "why the estimates. . . were altered as successive drafts were created. . . .", the evidence from the texts is that various reviewers (including the then NIO for Latin America) were not in agreement with the views of the drafter nor, as it turned out, was the initial author who made substantial changes in his judgments in the face of Cuban actions and critical review. The Appendix offers a sketch of key themes and changes in the successive drafts.

It is an invariable temptation of the analyst's craft to discuss another's work in terms of how the reviewer would have done the same task. Some of that tendency will be reflected in my commentary on these drafts--but my purpose is to use this example to raise some questions about how National Estimates can be made more useful and accurate. Hopefully, these observations will lead toward ways in which "we can learn to do better in the future", especially on the specific topic of Cuban foreign policy, which will remain a major problem for some time to come.

This discussion will have two facets--a substantive critique of what the estimate drafts said and a commentary on elements of the analytic style and terminology.

Comments on the Substance

In considering the overall evolution of the 11 drafts, two matters are most apparent: they were uniformly behind events and data available to CIA; and, the essential body of text (called analysis) remained mostly intact while the major conclusions changed dramatically. It is also remarkable that the long, elegantly-written text gave rather little attention to the facts of Cuban behavior known to the intelligence community and likely to be of enormous interest and value to policymakers if synthesized and attractively presented (using maps, charts, graphs as well as prose).** Detailed comments will cover four themes: the gap between events and the analysis; the evident "mind-set" problem; the misunderstanding of the Cuban-Soviet relationship; and the parochialism which failed to take account of Cuban actions outside Latin America.

*The Appendix at pp 9-13 summarizes the evolution of each successive draft.

**A marked contrast to the estimate in its emphasis on factual information about Cuban actions is the NFAC/OPA paper, Cuba: Promoting Armed Struggle in South America, September 1981 (PA 81-10372).

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Estimate Drafts Were Behind Events and Data

Starting in late 1978, CIA increased its coverage and analysis of the Sandinista guerrillas and their sources of foreign support. In the first five months of 1979 (January through May), there were more than 40 special memos, NID/PDB items, and Latin American Review articles which described an increasingly active and effective Cuban support system. On 2 May 1979 a draft prepared by OPA/NFAC came to this conclusion:

"The Castro regime apparently concluded by at least last fall that prospects for revolutionary upheaval in Central America over the next decade or so had markedly improved. . . . As a result, Cuba has intensified its efforts to unify insurgent groups not only in Nicaragua--where Cuba has concentrated its efforts--but in Guatemala and El Salvador as well."
(PA-M-79-10208, 2 May 1979, p 1)

Following the Sandinista victory in July 1979, there were many NID/PDB items summarizing the extent of Cuban support for the new revolutionary government; and as early as 22 August 1979, an NFAC memo analyzing Cuban and Nicaraguan (i.e. FSLN) plans to support Central American guerrillas with training to begin in Nicaragua. The NID of 24 August 1979 reported Sandinista plans to train Salvadoran guerrillas and an NFAC/OPA analysis of 27 August 1979 was the first in a series of monthly memos for National Security Adviser Brzezinski and others which chronicled the expanded Cuban and Nicaraguan support for the extreme left in the region. From September 1979 to July 1980 there were about 40 to 50 additional NID items or memos on this topic. In December 1979 there was a very important planning and unification meeting in Havana where six extreme left groups from El Salvador established a unified command structure and where Castro was [] explicit about his intentions to help them take power in El Salvador while strengthening the insurgent groups in Guatemala and leaving Honduras as a "funnel". The public announcement of the guerrilla command in El Salvador in January 1980 was followed by a well-documented increase in Cuban/Nicaraguan support and enormous increased violence in El Salvador (estimated victims increased from about 800 in 1979 to about 9,000 in 1980. 25X1

How did the July 1980 draft describe Cuban policy in the region? Although stating that "support for violent revolutionary groups in Central America has increased", the draft emphasized that Cuban policy was "in transition" while an "encompassing reappraisal" was under way (p 1). Concerning the future, the draft said, "we expect that Castro will pursue ambivalent and contradictory policies during the next three to six months, while gradually moving toward a radical renovation of his regional policy." (p 3)

Concerning the Cuban presence in Nicaragua--which NID and other CIA products had described as directly supportive of Sandinista consolidation of power--the July 1980 draft says: "the Sandinista government also looks to Cuba as its primary inspiration and benefactor. . . . Between 3,400-4,000 Cubans provide a multitude of services in virtually all areas of public life" (p 27).

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As the pace of revolutionary violence increased during the next year, the estimate drafts came closer to conveying some of the factual information available to CIA, but the gap remained so that an outside reader would at first presume the author had little more access to information than the average private scholar.

The June/July 1981 final estimate and analysis had caught up with the 1979-80 information but still failed to reflect or present many relevant events and analyses of 1981. A synthesis of Cuban actions in Latin America (titled "Cuban Covert Action in Latin America") was prepared by CIA and DIA in 1981 with the Department of State producing a draft in May 1981 very close to that which was finally released to the public. This report described the synergistic connection among the different elements of Cuba's subversive apparatus as follows:

Cuban subversion today is backed by an extensive secret intelligence and training apparatus, modern military forces and a large and sophisticated propaganda network. Utilizing agents and contacts nurtured for more than twenty years, the Castro government is providing ideological and military training and material and propaganda support to numerous violent groups, often several in one country. ("Cuba's Renewed Support for Revolutionary Violence", (U), 14 December 1981, p 1)

Except for El Salvador and Guatemala, neither the factual information nor the sense for the broad pattern of Cuban actions, as described in this intelligence community product in the spring of 1981, was in the final estimate. Nor for that matter was there more than an occasional parenthetical reference to a series of violent attacks staged by Cuban-supported groups which followed the tough rhetoric of the new US administration. These events included, among others:

Costa Rica - armed attack of US Embassy guards (Mar. 81).

- four terrorists machine-gun police vehicle (Apr. 81).
- terrorists murder three policemen and a taxi driver; links to Argentine Tupamaros, Uruguan Montoneros, Colombian M-19 and Cuba directly are found (June 81).
- infiltration of terrorists from Nicaragua with target being the Guatemalan Embassy staff (July 81).

Honduras - bombing of Honduras parliament; seizing of Honduran airliner; increase in terrorist infiltration from Cuban training camps.

Colombia/Panama - murder of Mr. Chester Bitterman by the M-19 guerrilla group; sending of 90 Colombian M-19 guerrillas from Cuban training camps, through Panama, to attack Colombia.

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Ecuador - possible assassination of President Roldos claimed by Colombian M-19 guerrillas in retaliation for his having turned captured terrorists over to the Colombian government.

The estimate would have been more complete if it had examined the implications of these and other events.

The Mind-Set Problem

The radar operator at Pearl Harbor then, or NORAD today, who doesn't use data that disagrees with his perspective is the classic example of the mind-set problem long identified as a cardinal danger in the world of intelligence. Of course, as one colleague has noted to me, it is often hard to distinguish between a "mind-set" (or a "construct" when used positively) and wisdom.

It is absolutely clear that the primary author of these drafts came to the task with a deep, rich, and rather elaborate sense of who Castro thinks he is and what motivates his behavior. The drafter also had very definite beliefs about how Castro viewed the US and what Cuban domestic failures implied for its foreign actions. However, little of the beautifully-written text on these themes informs the reader what evidence the author is using or even how he reached his conclusions.

On a number of issues that throughout the 11 drafts remain the ostensible keys to the interpretation and prediction of Cuban actions in Latin America, the judgments of the draft change completely as the "mind-set" seems to melt away--slowly over one year. Each element of this "mind-set" will be discussed briefly.

The July 1980 draft sees "different Cuban actions if Castro does not reach some accommodation with the US" (p 5). Not until draft number seven (11 May 81) does this interest in "accommodation" fade away as a much sharper and more confrontational view of Castro is presented. My question: in the light of the failed normalization efforts from 1974 to 1979: why did the drafter think that "accommodation" was on Castro's mind?

A related point is that in the early drafts, Castro's concerns about possible US reactions restrict and limit his actions. But by the final estimate, this changes completely, as we are told that, "In his logic, militancy and defiance will be seen as the best course for keeping the US at bay and for creating sufficient revolutionary siblings in the region to insulate him over time from US pressures" (July 81, p 14). But, why the surprise--offensive action has been Castro's method for two decades?

Initially, Cuban domestic failures and frustrations were seen as partially distracting Castro and limiting his international subversion. But the final estimate reverses this judgment: "Castro's emphasis on support of insurgencies also reflects his frustration over domestic problems" (June 81, p 3). This is, of course, a perennial issue in foreign policy analysis--do domestic problems limit leaders' actions abroad or encourage them to use the international arena

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as a diversion? Either can be true at different times. But because the issue is so basic and comes up so often, the CIA might have been expected to have presented a logical case for one interpretation or another--these drafts do not.

Another perennial theme--especially in dealing with dictatorships--is the question of "pragmatic" or "hardline" factions' impact on foreign policy. The July 1980 draft discusses the "rise of the hardliners" which is said to have begun with the appointment of a tougher Interior Minister in December 1979 when "the first intimations of a return to Stalinism were heard" (p 11). The draft also notes "though of late, Castro has been more attracted to the hardline school of thought, he has taken no steps yet decisively to upset the balance of power among his various advisors" (p 13).

Aside from admiration for what must be incredibly good sources for such difficult judgments, the reader is led to wonder whether it was the "pragmatists" who counselled Castro to send tens of thousands of Cuban troops to Africa and the Middle East during the 1970s? The final estimate continues to view the "rise" of the hardliners as an important causal factor (July 81, p 4-5) but does note, "A cardinal tenet of the Castro government from its inception has been that support for revolutionaries elsewhere in Latin America is a right and duty of the Cuban revolution" (p 5). That is correct and this fact along with the aggressive behavior of Castro over many years on three continents calls into considerable question the operational significance of the rather elaborate "hardliner"/"pragmatist" discussion.

Contrary to all the evidence, the early drafts indicated that Castro's desire to protect the revolutionary victory in Nicaragua would make him more cautious. By the last draft, this presumption is corrected by noting that revolutionary success in El Salvador and Guatemala will help defend the Nicaraguan gains. This insight was about two years behind CIA data and judgments.

It is worth noting that the "mind-set" about Cuba did not permit any serious discussion of Castro's past successes in neutralizing or ignoring US opposition to his actions. Nor was there any consideration of Cuban aggression in Africa/Middle East during the same time that the three US administrations sought to "normalize relations".

Parochial Failure to Take Account of Cuban Actions in Africa and the Middle East

All the drafts display an astonishing parochialism in failing to present and take account of the Cuban subversive and military actions in Africa and the Middle East from 1970 to the present. These are of interest in understanding whether Cuba is moderate or revolutionary. These actions are directly relevant to an analysis of expanded Cuban actions in Latin America in at least the following ways:

- better than Castro's rhetoric or academic literature in Latin American studies, Cuban activities during the 1970s demonstrated a strong commitment to revolutionary warfare and operational coordination with the Soviet Union;

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- the evolution of Cuban activities in Africa--from the beginning of subversion in 1962 to tens of thousands of troops in action--might offer some lessons for Latin America;
- Cuban intelligence, propaganda and military skills and assets were greatly increased by the Middle Eastern/African experiences of the 1970s;
- Cuba's use of various third-country terrorist groups and its capacity to use proxies and cut-outs were expanded enormously in the Middle Eastern/African arenas with the effects visible in its careful, concealed and mostly competent handling of its new Nicaraguan partner;
- Cuba, in working with the more experienced secret police of East Germany and the Soviet Union in building internal security systems, establishing reliable military cadre and military internal security networks in Africa, probably increased its skills in consolidating revolutions. These are now being applied in Latin America.

Cuban-Soviet Relationship Presented in an Over-Complicated Way

The final estimate states simply "The Soviet-supported Cuban challenge to US regional interests will continue to be formidable" (June 81, p 2). But this is in contrast to most of the drafts where an overly complex and convoluted treatment of the Soviet-Cuban relationship essentially creates the impression in the reader of a difference in purposes or of Soviet restraint on Castro (for example, the 5 November 1980 draft argues that Moscow will restrain Castro in South America).

The first draft makes this rather remarkable and, to me, unintelligible statement:

"As Cuba's dependence on the USSR and willingness to perform proxy services increased during the 1970s, the relationship with Moscow actually declined as a burden on his maneuverability." (July 1980, p 8)

This was somewhat contradicted by the news on the following page of the same draft that Cuban reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 "confirmed the true nature of Cuban subservience to the USSR". (July 1980, p 9)

Had the author not heard of the events of 1968 after the invasion of Czechoslovakia--the Soviet cutoff of oil to Cuba and the takeover of the DGI by the KGB or any other number of events and actions which clearly showed that Castro could be controlled and ordered when necessary? None of this relevant background is mentioned in the discussion of Cuban-USSR relations despite being amply documented both in the open literature and earlier CIA studies of Cuba. The final estimate says, "The Soviet Union and Cuba share similar objectives regarding Latin America" (July 1981, p 9), and the strong evidence of Soviet support for Cuban tactics in Central America was well in hand by the summer of 1980 when the writing was still so ambiguous--despite the preceding decade of collaboration. Why?

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Comments on Analytic Style and Terminology

Much of the CIA writing which I have seen to date seems to focus on judgments about the mood, expectations, or potential reactions of foreign leaders or governments while offering little information about the actions of those same leaders or governments.

This series of drafts reflected this tendency in two ways--a focus on the moods and beliefs of Castro and an almost theatrical hypothetical dialogue between "hardliners" and "pragmatists".

The Castro centeredness is especially perplexing because when positive things happen, he is the initiator, but when negative or aggressive actions are taken, he is being pushed or pulled by the "hardliners". For example, the final draft says, "Castro himself has been attracted to more active support for regional revolutionaries, in good measure because of his frustration and anger over domestic and foreign policy setbacks". (July 1981, p 4)

We also learn that "Castro no longer has any illusions that Torrijos will become a dependable ally" (July 1981, p 8) which prompts the question--did he ever think that or did the author believe Castro once expected that? In a word, the unremitting focus on Castro's hopes, fears, and beliefs, all of which are presumed to change dramatically over the course of the 11 drafts, leads to the question--do these statements about Castro derive from data (so it would seem to a new reader or outsider) or do they serve as a literary device for conveying the author's changing opinions?

This question applies even more to the remarkable use of the "pragmatist" vs "hardliner" theme where the author(s) express beliefs about what the hardliners are telling Castro:

- "We believe the hardliners hold that armed struggle is the only effective way to achieve revolutionary change."
- "They probably are convinced that the correlation of forces now favors the communist camp."
- "They probably believe US threats will strengthen domestic support for the Castro regime." (July 1981, p 4)

Last, is an observation on what seems to me a pattern of terminology that conceals the human and political meaning of what communist revolutionary warfare brings. Through all 11 drafts we read about:

- "sibling revolutionary regimes" not pro-Cuban dictatorships,
- "radical renovation of his regional policy", not increased terrorism and guerrilla warfare,
- "the romantic and nationalist" phase of Cuban foreign policy--not subversion and aggression against the struggling democracies--Venezuela, Colombia, or armed landings in Guatemala, Panama, etc.

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- "enticing new opportunities for expanding its regional role" not a chance to bring down the Central American governments.

Granted that terminology is a matter of taste, there is still a need to express—clearly what happens when a Soviet-backed totalitarian state attacks its neighbors.

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APPENDIX -- Highlights and Evolution of the Cuba/Latin America NIE
July 1980 to July 1981 -- 11 Successive Drafts

1/ 18 July 1980 -- 1st draft

- Highlights Cuban "reappraisal" of policy for international and domestic reasons.
- Predicts "ambivalent", contradictory policies over next 3-6 months, but toward more radical.
- Cites "growing fear of US" as a somewhat constraining factor.
- If Cuba does not reach "accommodation" with the US by early or mid '81, then would certainly go to hard line.
- Generally, characterizes Cuba's foreign policy as being "in transition", things still tentative.
- Fear of US said to be a "much larger factor constraining Cuban policy".
- Makes much of the "hardlines" vs "pragmatists" in Cuban circles.
- Stresses, as a motivation, the Castro regime's setbacks at home and abroad.
- Much historical background.
- Has some discussion of South America that does not "fit" rest of discussion.

2/ 23 September 1980

- Still says Cuban policy is "being reappraised" but notes radical changes that have emerged already.
- Support to leftists has "intensified" and that commitment will continue to grow "at least at a guarded pace".
- Still attributes much importance to Castro's desire to avoid a clash between his "hardliners" and "pragmatists".
- Strongly suggests that a more radical course would isolate Havana in Latin America and that this a major deterrent for Castro.
- Avoids (as does first draft) any real judgment on how likely the "radical" option is.
- Reordering of paragraphs, but no apparent leap forward in judgments.

3/ 23 October 1980

- Degree of commitment to revolutionaries still said to be likely to grow "at least at a guarded pace"; some effort to distinguish more neatly between "prudent" support of left and so-called "reckless" approach (i.e., radical policy).
- "Reckless" option -- now defined as "aggressive and impulsive", and still hinging on failure to reach accommodation with US.
- Rationale for this "reckless" approach is spelled out here for first time (i.e., to tie up US so that it cannot hit directly at Castro).
- Both drafts mention that Cuba wants armed revolt in Honduras.
- New draft says Havana's militant line helped cause split among Honduran leftists.
- This draft more explicitly cites course of US-Cuban relations as a factor in determining whether Castro adopts a "reckless" course or not.
- Gives odds (1 in 5) for likelihood of radical, "reckless" course.
- In Key Judgments, gives somewhat less prominence to factors that could constrain Castro.

4/ 5 November 1980

- In Key Judgments -- adds a constraint. Cuba will hesitate to go for broke in El Salvador and Guatemala, because to do so would endanger principal aim -- which is to safeguard revolution in Nicaragua.
- Also says Moscow will restrain Castro in South America, where Soviets have important equities they don't want threatened.
- Highlights status of US-Cuban relations as a major factor in determining Cuba's regional actions.
- Stresses that Havana has unique advantages over US in exploiting problems in region (nationalism, Latin suspicions of US, etc.).
- Changing wording on ascendancy of "hardliners" reflects uncertainty over just how important a factor that phenomenon is.
- Highlights the fact that El Salvador and Guatemala are the "priority targets".
- Terms describing Cuban presence in Nicaragua and the importance of Nicaragua revolution to Cuba are made more dramatic.
- Updated to take account of Seaga win in Jamaica -- this is interpreted as contributing to Castro's reliance on violent tactics.

- Section on "Need for Mexican Support" is condensed.
- As in previous two drafts, difficulty is in assessing whether paper really sees "reckless" or "prudent" policy as more likely (despite Key Judgments).
- Second and third drafts have revised sections on "Conclusions and Implications for the US" -- not spelled out this way in first draft; this device attempts to spell out more clearly than 1st draft, the effect of US ties on Cuban policymaking.
- New sentence: "Castro would readily sacrifice any improvement of US ties to take advantage of any opportunity that might arise." (This, then, calls into question the validity of saying that US ties are vitally important to Cuban strategy in the first place.)
- Throughout three drafts, hard to tell if drafter really believes US relations are causal or not -- community differs on this and drafter may be seeking ways to accommodate.
- Hindrances to US room for maneuver are now couched more in terms of Latin "hangups" rather than in terms of residual Cuban leverage against US.

5/ 17 December 1980

- Language perpetuates the problem of determining whether the draft in fact is predicting an all-out "reckless" course by Castro in Central America or not ("prudent guarded pace", etc.).
- Highlights reluctance of region's "progressive" governments (Mexico, Panama) to break with JRG, e.g., as a restraint on Castro.
- Paragraph 73 -- The degree to which Castro feels (at some point) trapped and threatened may be one key (in pushing him to a reckless course). Former drafts said this could be the key.
- Drops the caption, "Implication for the US".
- Another "key" added is Castro's perception of the likelihood of a forceful US response.

6/ 10 March 1981

- New format -- "Key Judgments and Outlook" precede text, and their tone is different.
- First part of Key Judgments now stresses importance (as a motivating force for Castro) of his perception of increased opportunities in region, contrasted with earlier (seeming) primacy of his setbacks at home and abroad (those now come second).

- Also highlights supposed Cuban fears of US countermeasures more than earlier drafts.
- Similarly, now highlights Castro relationship with Moscow and effects of his actions on relations with USSR -- stresses Moscow as a constraint on Havana.
- Outlook, country-by-country, is attached to Key Judgments.
- Returns to an earlier draft's recitation of Cuban advantages and US disadvantages in region and adds to the list.
- Body of text largely similar to earlier drafts.

7/ 11 May 1981

- Format changes again -- now leads with "Summary Conclusions", then Key Judgments.
- Now the Sandinista success of '79 along with Castro's setbacks said to motivate him.
- US policy said to make Castro's choices tougher.
- Says Castro can perhaps be slowed, but not deterred.
- Now, USSR is said to "share" Castro's goal of undermining US influence; but Moscow, if influenced (undescribed US pressure) might act to brake Castro.
- Also says US policies in region will not affect area's inherent instability -- but could "raise costs" for Cuba, USSR.
- Key Judgments now lead off with statement on "Castro's persistent objectives" in Latin America -- a generally sharper, confrontational characterization of him.
- Also features USSR angle more prominently than before -- but is wishy-washy on extent to which Soviets indeed influence Castro's regional policy -- though suggests he has considerable leeway in hemisphere.
- Generally, much lengthier coverage of Cuba-USSR, and USSR interests in Latin America.
- Otherwise, text itself largely similar to previous drafts.

8/ 15 May 1981

- About the same as 11 May draft:

9/ 21 May 1981

- About the same.

10/ 15 June 1981

- Now estimate is divided in to separate pieces -- "The Estimate" and "Supporting Analysis" (to be issued later in July 1981).

"The Estimate"

- Introductory Statement -- appears to be newly written from the ground up -- though in some ways synthesizing from past drafts.

Highlights Cuba's revised foreign policy, improbability that Castro will make any concessions to US.

Highlights Soviet support for region's leftists and Castro's "militancy".

- Is followed by modified version of most recent Key Judgments -- again highlighting Castro's reaction to greater opportunities in region, as well as his reaction to setbacks.
- New paragraph -- specifically rules out use of Cuban combat forces in Latin America "in the near term".
- Now adds to list of Cuba's strengths, its "massive" economic and military assistance from USSR.

11/ 9 July 1981

- By and large repeats body of previous version of text. (International setting. . . . Cuban setting. . . . etc.)

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15 January 1982

Review of Nicaraguan Analysis Since January 1979

Your request for comments on the Nicaraguan analysis cites the realistic CIA memo of 2 May 1979 and asks: "how this and any earlier estimates and subsequent estimates related to the picture as it has emerged to date in Nicaragua".

The basis for these comments includes a review and summary of the main items of analysis produced by CIA both in the regular reporting series such as the NID and PDB (see Appendix A, pp 1-4) and special memoranda sent in more informal channels (see Appendix B, pp 5-8). This production record demonstrates that CIA performed well in reporting many aspects of the developing situation. What is remarkable in the light of the information represented by this reporting effort is that the Carter administration policymakers tended to ignore events and the CIA reports until major crises forces some type of response. This is most clearly illustrated by the following:

- In mid-June 1979, Presidential Review Memorandum 46 was prepared by State and included as an appendix the CIA memo of 2 May 1979. However, virtually nothing in the text for the President conveyed any real sense for the degree of Cuban and other international communist involvement with the Sandinistas.
- Starting as soon as one month after the 19 July 1979 Sandinista victory--which had confirmed the previous reporting--CIA reported that the Sandinistas and Cubans were aiding guerrillas from El Salvador and would step up the pace of attack; the Carter policymakers failed to even consider new policies or approaches for the obvious next target country until the December 1979 meeting in Havana unified six extreme left groups and then led to massive demonstrations in El Salvador.

Many other examples could be cited--including the unwillingness of the former US Ambassador in Nicaragua to face up to the real facts of Sandinista actions to monopolize power and the former US Ambassador in El Salvador who simply turned away all the CIA information about the guerrilla buildup which was followed by the 10 January 1981 offensive with the comforting illusion that they were "only juvenile delinquents" with no real combat capacities.

This still leaves two questions: how good was the CIA analysis and could the intelligence community have done more to persuade the policymakers to pay attention? On the question of CIA performance (based on a reading of the material), there were three very good elements, but each was associated with less effective aspects; and there were three large areas of omission which are only now being remedied.

Following the failure of the summer/fall 1978 Sandinista insurrection and the intense US mediation efforts, CIA performed well in recognizing that a large crisis was impending. As early as January 1979 the NID warned about this.

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However, when a revolutionary situation is escalating, the primary intelligence question is (or usually ought to be) when will it seriously endanger the threatened government? As late as May 1979, the Agency said Somoza would probably last till the end of his term in 1981. Probably a bit of "group-think" was at work and might have been remedied by a conscious and specific effort to explore more pessimistic possibilities--along with indicators. As with the Shah, Somoza was not defeated; his army collapsed after morale was shattered by a combination of international and internal pressures. It seems that many analysts have difficulty empathizing with the life and death character of revolutionary warfare and the effects on threatened elites of their personal fears and expectations. In contrast, communist political leadership (with Sun Tzu) has always emphasized breaking the will of their enemies by false offers of leniency for collaboration or early surrender.

Reporting on Cuban support for and influence with the Sandinistas was very good and consistently improved as additional efforts were made. However, after the victory, despite a great deal of information, there was not enough realistic assessment of Marxist-Leninist techniques and actions to consolidate power. This was true despite the virtual repetition of the Cuban process without the mass executions and trials due to Castro's sound advice that deception be used to neutralize the US and have the West finance the new regime.

Also first rate was the reporting on Cuban and Sandinista plans and actions in Nicaragua immediately after the victory for the purpose of supporting the El Salvador guerrillas. However, this was not translated into any hard-headed assessment of how quickly the guerrilla threat there might grow later in 1979 and 1980. Again, perhaps a case of "group think" since most analysts at first seemed to think it would take two to three years for the buildup to reach the level actually attained in about one year.

From information seen, there seemed to be four key omissions in reporting and analysis:

- Much too little attention was given to the dramatically new level of non-communist support for the revolutionary left in the region--including Mexico--one overall analysis in June 1980 of a "new activism", but no focus on Central America despite the key role played by Mexico in undermining Somoza in May 1979; the same holds for the lack of informed attention to the financial, practical and propaganda support being given by the many Social Democratic groups (one report, Jan 81).
- In spite of long-established patterns of collaboration among the Soviet Union, Cuba and radical Arab forces such as Libya, the PLO, PFLP, DFLP. . . and many items of public and intelligence information, too little attention, thought and analysis was given to their role in support of the Central American extreme left--also a dramatic change in this region.

- Also, too little information has been collected and reported on the international sources of support for anti-communist moderates e.g. the free trade unions, Christian Democratic Parties, and countries like Venezuela--few analysts and policymakers seem to know much about this important group of participants.
- International links among the extreme right groups and their connections to exile funding sources in the US have apparently received hardly any effort.

Efforts are now being made to fill in information on the first two gaps. DDI/ALA has a good report on the Palestinian extremists in draft; an IIM on Mexican actions in Central America is being written and an IIM on the trans-national forces for and against the extreme left is scheduled. However, this is about three years after these groups and countries became publicly (as well as secretly engaged in a highly significant way. Underlying intelligence issues about Mexico and the social democratic groups have not yet been addressed (to my knowledge). These include: the extent of Cuban/Soviet penetration of the Mexican foreign ministry, the PRI and COPPAL, and similar questions about the social democratic groups and the German political action foundations.

Three Practical Suggestions

No one is or can be a prophet in looking ahead at fast-moving revolutionary warfare situations such as those in the Central America/Mexico region. But analysts could be encouraged to stretch their minds a bit more into the future on a probabilistic basis and do three things:

- 1/ In cases like El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica -- where there is clear evidence of a major attack on the government is in progress or is coming -- analysts should provide for the expression of a consensus analytic view and one or two more pessimistic alternative forecasts with indicators by which to judge their probability. The alternatives should be seen as an exercise-- "this is how it could go if we are more pessimistic"--not a prediction for which the analyst will be held accountable.
- 2/ Role play the enemy forces. For example, in El Salvador, "if I were the FMLN commander, here is the way I would try to bring down the government--internally and internationally--in the next 6-9 months". Let several analysts do this independently as a short (one-man day) exercise, compare notes, and then sketch out a hypothetical plan along with indicators of whether anything like that is being tried. Very important here is to project ahead on the basis of the international political calendar as well as the internal situation. Again, this should be seen as an exercise in creative intuition not predictions which come back to haunt the analyst.

- 3/ Occasionally, create a lively person-to-person debate in a seminar setting (2-3 hours) where a small group with some relevant background but no current analytic responsibilities in the area receive in advance, first, the facts in the form of chronologies, data, TDs, etc., second, a few major analytic products deriving from that data base— and then use the seminar to ask questions and make suggestions. Members of PFIAB or the Senior Review Panel, plus some DDO personnel and the NIOs might be good participants in such a bi-monthly session on a few key issues.

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